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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 PA-01 ICA-11 CIAE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2160
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4801

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, SF
SUBJECT: MINISTER OF LABOR RAPS CARTER, YOUNG, US POLICY

1. THIS MORNING'S (AUGUST 17) ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS PRESS REPORT MINISTER OF LABOR S.P. BOTHA STATEMENT AT THE NATIONALIST NATAL PARTY CONGRESS AUGUST 15 THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S LEADERSHIP POSED A "RISK TO THE SECURITY OF THE WORLD." BOTHA SINGLED OUT FOR PARTICULAR CRITICISM THE PRESIDENT'S REPUTED SUGGESTION THAT THE WORLD SHOULD DIVEST ITSELF OF THE FEAR OF COMMUNISM. ACCORDING TO BOTHA, "THERE CAN BE NO OTHER SHOCK ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH SHATTERED THE WORLD MORE THAN (THIS)."

2. AMBASSADOR YOUNG ALSO CAME UNDER ATTACK WITH BOTHA REPORTED AS SAYING, "BUT SOME TIME AGO THE BLUE EYED BOY YOUNG PROCLAIMED THE CUBANS WERE A FACTOR OF STABILITY AND THAT THERE WOULD BE NO THREAT OF COMMUNISM ON THE CONTINENT...THAT THEY POSED NO THREAT TO PEACE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA." HE CONTINUED, "ARE WE TO BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT HAVE THE GUTS TO STAND UP TO A SMALL ISLAND, TO CASTRO AND HIS HENCHMEN? WILL THE WEST PIN ITS HOPES TO A COUNTRY THAT WON'T STAND UP
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TO CUBA?" BOTHA ALSO QUESTIONED THE USG'S WILLINGNESS TO HONOR COMMITMENTS, MAKING REFERENCE TO THE AGREEMENT REGARDING FUEL FOR THE SAFARI ONE NUCLEAR PROJECT. HE ASKED, "WHAT WOULD BE THE POSITION OF THE WORLD IF IT COULD NOT TRUST A COUNTRY LIKE THE UNITED STATES TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS?"

3. COMMENT: THERE WAS NOT HEAVY INTEREST IN BOTHA'S REMARKS.

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NONE OF THE PAPERS FRONT PAGED THE REPORT AND THE RAND DAILY MAIL DESCRIBED THE MEETING WHERE THEY WERE DESCRIBED AS "SPARSELY ATTENDED". VORSTER, WHO ADDRESSED THE NATAL CONGRESS LAST YEAR, WILL DELIVER THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS THIS YEAR AT THE TRANSVAAL CONGRESS ON SEPTEMBER 12 AND THIS SPEECH WILL OF COURSE BE THE PRINCIPAL REFLECTION OF THE PARTY'S WORLD VIEW AND ITS GENERAL MOOD. S.P. BOTHA'S SPEECH, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS SOME MELLOWING OF THE SEIGE MENTALITY DISPLAYED LAST YEAR. LAST YEAR'S ADDRESSES, INCLUDING VORSTER'S, PAINTED THE US AND THE WEST AS INTENT ON ACHIEVING THE DESTRUCTION OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICA. S.P. BOTHA'S COMMENTARY, THOUGH STILL HIGHLY CRITICAL, AND MORE SHRILL THAN HIS NORMAL PERSONAL STYLE, IS MILDER THAN LAST YEAR'S APPROACH, AND HIGHLIGHTS PERCEIVED US WEAKNESS BEFORE COMMUNISM. SOME OBSERVERS ALSO SEE S.P. BOTHA'S PROMINENCE AT THE NATAL CONFERENCE AS SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF THE BUDDING STRUGGLE FOR LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION.
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